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Trail's End

Poems of New Mexico

gift

Underwood
NB

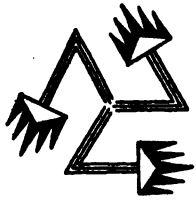
By John Curtis Underwood

War Flames.
Processionals.
The Iron Muse.
Americans.
Literature and Insurgency.

Trail's End

By

John Curtis Underwood



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1921

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1921

To
Two Women

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FOREWORD

My fathers tracked across the plains,
Forebears in heart, mayhap in blood,
To find this region that remains
Raised from the sea's salt flood.

They learned its highlands and its trails,
Its snow peaks and arroyos brown,
Its forests green, its misty veils
Rolling gray mountains down.

They knew blue skies of Paradise,
Its dry, clear air whose breath is life,
Its high rock bastioned ruins that rise
Hewed by a giant's knife;

Its gardens and its orchard trees,
Along the trenched acequia's flow,
Unfailing as its sun that sees
All things that smile and grow;

Where long, low, brown adobe walls
Leaning along the foot hills, climb;
Home of a brown skinned race that calls
With the slow smile of time.

This old, star-trailed Franciscan town
Where life is always afternoon,
Wrapped in its ragged robe of brown,
My fathers found one June.

BURROS

We met four burros in the streets of Santa Fe one steel blue morning,
When snow on the mountains crept lower down trails they were treading.
Two were gray, and two were brown to match the merchandise they marched with,
Naked cedar split and frost rimed piled on gnarled brown pinyon wood,
Bound round furry backs and flanks in huge wooden horseshoes.

And the gray and brown small brothers of St. Francis plodded soberly,
Turning corners of the long and crooked trail their fathers tracked from Burgos and Assisi,
Trampling planks of tossing ships and foam swept beaches brown as Mexico,
Treading where the padres tramped, on trails as brown as tattered robes that fluttered round them.

They went stacked with stuff for fire that flamed far northward in strong sunlight.
The padres' skin burned brown through torrid summers; their burros' hair grew long and thicker through bleak winters.
And the flame that fired its human torches in Toledo, and leapt across the sea, harrassed them still and swept them with it.
The brown padres sweated in the desert, and the burros walked beside them bearing food and wine and water.
The gray padres shivered on white mesas where their burros carried firewood, charcoal, and live coals in battered braziers.

The burros carried crosses like their threadbare masters of slow martyrdoms,
Uprights rough and cross bars crude, men rudely joined and set together and raised.
By bright springs and turbid rivers, on brown rocks and mountains meeting sunrise.
They bore rude wooden symbols of a life that parched in deserts burned and thirsted with a yearning infinite;
Warmed the dead to life, and dying lifted high a torch of red tradition that each padre's burning body raised from dying once more.

And the burros beside the padres such as bore a Babe in Egypt, brought the crosses home to Santa Fe;
Saw their shadows when they grew from earth; and lost them when men raised them higher;
Heard the bells beside them chiming through three centuries of rhyming gray traditions.
And they bore the little children of those dying years that laughing beat them with brown billets saved from crimson fires.

Still they bear their timber horseshoes of good luck to all who conquer cold and hunger, with slight tools of light;
Bearing split wood for sacrifice to faith that forms its crosses where two faggots set together light their fire on earth's bare altar.
They bear brown laughing children where the brown cathedral's bells are chiming, rhyming still old rituals;
Stepping soberly and slowly, small brown brothers of St. Francis, small gray guardians
Of the splintered keys of sight, and love like his, like light, for sun and mountain, star and shadow;
Burden bearers, high and holiest, like the lowliest and the least, bird or beast.

Santa Fé 11 7 18

FLIVVERS

They come and stand in the Plaza and drink deep there,
While their riders drink deep at our bubble fountains and soda fountains;
Little tin tramps of the world with bulging side pockets and canteens,
And bedding rolled and shouldered on roofs as deep in dust,
As the bleached straw suit cases strapped behind and never opened
From Lowell, Moline and Mobile to Santa Monica and San Diego.

Their women wear clothes like their men as often as not,
Sweaters, riding breeches, miners' boots and faded khaki overalls,
Hiding all from head to foot but sun-browned faces and sun-tanned fingers,
Girls that have soaked in the sun and bathed in it in brown and hidden arroyos.
Some of them sit in the Plaza with little hand mirrors and vanity cases and powder their faces.
Some pencil letters and diaries, and some take time to stare
At gray burros and brown adobes while their mothers are marketing,
Big brown women and little wiry ones with bulging, faded, flowered knitting bags.

The flivvers stand fast or sulk to garages to be blacksmithed.
Men with the trail's slow traces in browning faces,
Of freedom from shop and farm and office desk and folio,
Curb them, swing them away, feed them, groom them and bring them back
Where the women and children are waiting.

Children whose eyes grow bright from miracles overnight,
Crowding an epic into three months or four,
Since they beat through spring rain and sleet and mud that was bottomless,
On an endless old Santa Fé trail, and the rest like the streams of a water shed;
Till the high plains passed one night, and the sun pulled out of the sky line
A far, faint saw-toothed coast line of mountains that marched together,
Marched and mounted in monstrous ranks till they looked like a wall at the end of the world.

There where the West begins they filed through the passes.
And the women walked with the children up shortcuts to zigzags,
To the wheel tracks on the summits; and they stared and wondered and went on,
Slowly breathing the beauty of God's vast world at last revealed to them.
They moved on with it day by day, and grew used to it,
Rolling closer to the westering sun, and camping nearer the stars night after night,
They met bleak mesas and buttes, they forded wide rivers of sand that sucked at the wheels.
They turned and twisted, rose and dipped, slewed and slipped past range after range in a maze of mountain wonderlands,
Where a man might lose himself utterly, and a woman go mad at the thought of it.

Slowly they lost the old selves of little tame tastes and futile hastes,
As they dared the deserts and the snows through blue days like beads on the trail's brown rosary,
Till a thousand trails that converge from Old Mexico to Montana and Canada,
Met on tht last brown slopes where bronchos at sun-up shy at girls in blankets like logs by the road.
They wanted water, oil and gas, ice cream and ice drinks and tense minutes at the movies again.
And some of them wandered into the past in our Palace and knew new mysteries.

They halt in our streets and refit, and some of us envy them,
Who live on the roof of the world, and still hug chain gangs of habit,
As they stutter away to the sunset with their faded and fluttering pennants,
And their dusty moving tents of Romance on various adventures.
And their eyes hold wider horizons, and their lips are wiser and warmer,
With their little human hopes and plans, and their hearts on the sun's high pilgrimage.

Santa Fé 2 22 19

THE PLAZA

Motors weave their mazes around it.
Motors stand empty and waiting for shopping women,
Where dusty, high tilted, spliced and weather stained,
Swaying and creaking, the lumbering ox wagons
Rolled to the end of the Trail.

Cowboys' bronchos clatter over red brick pavements,
Girls in sweaters, trim puttees, trig riding breeches,
Tenderfoot girls in high-heeled shoes, khaki leggins and peek-a-boo waists,
Red capped school girls two together, are riding bare back and circling,
Where the gaunt chargers of the dust gray Conquistadores
Limped and flinched from bits and spurs that propped them from falling.

Boys on bicycles glide and loop,
Where the long pack trains of mules and pack horses plodded and slithered.
Fledgling priests from St. Michael's with purple pennants and ribbons,
Bound for a ball game go eating ice cream cones,
Where the learned Padres tramped the long trail from Old Mexico.
And the Padres' burros still stand here sleekly obsequient.

Indians sunburned red for a thousand years from Tesuque and San Ildefonso,
With their red head bands and blankets of life glowing red in them,
Flame past benches where bank clerks, cigar drummers, tourists, T-B's,
Cough and chatter like apes, and chew black tobacco and big black war head lines,
Passing proudly and imperially erect and self sufficient,
As their free fore-runners were in the days when this place was the fore-court of a Pueblo capital.

The ghosts of those proud Pueblo days and the stark stone age before it,
Ghosts of the old dear idle days when men gossiped here of Marat and Napoleon,
Ghosts of trappers of Taos and Jesuits of Rome whose eyes struck sparks like swords,

Ghosts of Forty-Niners who tarried to refit on their gold rush westward,
Ghosts of Sibley's Confederates who gambled as wildly here for a continent,
Ghosts of the gladdest girls who ever smiled at mountain sunrise or mandolin music;

Ghosts of the saddest widows and prostitutes who ever implored Our Lady of Pity,
Ghosts of yesterday, before the railroad came, ghosts of desperados and their slayers. of Billy the Kid, and Pat Garrett,
Ghosts of the day before yesterday, when the first trails that tied together here were faint as a dream's forgetfulness,
Ghosts of Oñate and Benevides, of Castefiada, of Coronado and De Vargas,

Ghosts of Doniphan and Armijo, of Fremont and Kit Carson and Lew Wallace,
Ghosts of fighters and writers and builders of low adobes and red brick abortions,
Ghosts of the past and today and tomorrow, still fuse in this focus of living.

They live in the laughter of children that their fathers' fathers begot.
They live in the smiles of women whose bodies and souls they worshiped and lusted for.
They live in the looks of men that they loved and killed, and traded with and betrayed.
They live in the houses they builded, the trees they planted, the turf they sodded, the pavements they laid here,
In this gray meeting place of the winds of God and the wills of men for the feet of those that should follow them;
Here where the trails meet and cross, as the paths in the Plaza meet and cross,
In this fore-court of adventure by old camp fires of longing and forgetfulness;
Where the ghosts gather with the living in the sunlight and moonlight,
And the motors whirl like smoke, and the mountains stand sentry eternally.

Santa Fé 11 15 18

THE OLD PALACE

It lies, a long, low procession of life epitomized, rough cast in adobe,
Like a slow and plodding line of old Spanish Conquistadores,
Straggling through dust and heat, dead beat footmen following sweating horsemen,
Trailing rusty lances idly, and leaving dusty furrows in the sand behind them,
On the endless trail from Old Mexico to New Mexico.

They crept past brown and dry arroyos and bare and wind-swept ridges,
Gray, dust gray, with the steel in them dulled and dented
By the bowlders the Indians hurled at them from the tops of the tall terraced houses.
They crawled past beetling crags, and black mesas, and sombre shadows of mountains that menaced them,
They stabbed the cactus with their spears and drank its life-blood to sustain them, and pressed on past passes eternally unattainable;
Till they slaked their horses' dusty throats at last in the smooth gray ripples of the Rio Grande del Norte.

They sweated past the sand hills on old trading trails of the Queres and Tehuas,
They topped the last lean ridge, and watched a little river flowing westward through a valley time had left for them,
Those that were left from the trail and the trial the desert had made of them.
And they found peach orchards, and maize fields, and a Pueblo, and a place for them;
For a hand of life had led them to build here a city and a home for them,

They were the first forefingers of hands that wandered groping,
The first blunt forefingers of a tide that swept westward through the ocean from bleak acres by Corunna and Santandar,
Down from the orange and pomgranate groves to the wilder gold of the sunset,
Seeking room to spread and grow and glut its hunger insatiate for gold and great adventuring,
Eddying north from narrower limits near the Gulf, to the uplands of a widening continent.
And the desert took toll of them, but they pressed on and multiplied until they taxed the desert.

They tithed it and ditched it and built homes for the spirit of the race that led them,
Such as the Moors made and the Goths made when they met and mated in Spain.
And this old palace was the type and the chief of them.
They made homes for flocks and herds such as followed with the Indians and women when Coronado marched from Mexico,
As they made homes for earlier folk migrations of all herdsmen through the centuries,
First made a corral, then a square and a frontage of tenting for the face of it.

And the corral and the tenting grew to a courtyard and a patio with shaded arcades,
Such as the Moors made in Cordoba with rows of tent poles for their first slim pillars,
The Spanish captains and governors came to herd and pasture their people here,
And they made a greater sheep-fold and a Great House for the herding, and the people called it El Palacio—.

It stands as gray as the sheep with tree trunk pillars brown as stripped posts of corrals.
Made of the same sun-dried mud that the older herders and builders wrought with,
Long and broadly based, primitive and significant as a pueblo or a pyramid,
Where time made it a gray and lasting monument of a race that passed and yet lives here.
It stands a tomb of the past, and a treasure house of gray traditions and hidden histories.

It stands like an old gray college or cloister in Toledo or Salamanca.
More than tomb or college or cloister it embodies the past and interprets it,
With the leaves of its libraries, the ticking of its typewriters, the calling of its telephones talking to today and tomorrow.
And the brown, ranked pillars of its long arcade are the pillars of proud triumphal arches.
The great ghosts of the past stride through them, and then stand back again and mingle
With the natives and the tourists, and the painters and poets and lovers in the Plaza in the moonlight who linger and love it.

Santa Fé 10 5 18

THE FRIJOLES ROOM

They made an echo of antiquity
Of the room where Lew Wallace wrote Ben Hur in the early Eighties,
With his leather covered Morris chair and leather covered lap board
on its arms by one window.
And the shadows work on it, and shadows of a time as old as Jerusalem
Move in the place or rest like the words of a finished manuscript.

They fill the low show cases in the corners,
And two huge wall cases hewed from a three-foot adobe partition.
They flow through low doors in walls as thick at each end of the room,
In a low and narrow vista of door on door receding
Through the whole past of the Palace to shadowy doors before them.

They lie on white wooden shelves and wide surfaces,
Shadows of the past solidified in hand-worked bone and stone,
Shadows in hanging trays of glass like X-ray prints of the bones of the
past,
Skeleton fragments of the days when the caves of Tyuonyi were hand
carved and crowded,
Bone awls for ghostly garments, bone flutes for ghostly music,
Stone arrow heads, spear heads and cherts for shadowy huntings
and killings.

There are deep shadows on rank on rank of stone axe heads and
hammers,
Line on line of the story of the felling of trees and the wedging of
vigas for balconies,
Where shadowy women gossip and scold and walk on the face of
the cliff,
And children whose bodies have crumpled are playing on ladders
whose substance is dust.
There are hard shadows of stone hand mills where girls ground blue
corn.
And the crude stone quern still holds dull shadows of the rhythm of
the rubbing that caressed it,
Where they bent brown breasts to it, that swelled as they sang to it,

There are round shadows of smooth black stones one could hide in
her palm as she polished pottery.

There are shadows in the big flat bowls of gray and white and brown
and russet,
Where the life of a tribe that was, has slowly burned through the clay.
There are bowls whose circle is broken like the circle of feasters
that dipped from them.
There are patterned shards like fragments of lives men pattern out
piece by piece.

There are shadowy shafts of arrows and hand-carved stones for their
smoothing,
Shadows of the craft of old men who fashioned and fitted and flew
with them.
There are throwing sticks and praying sticks and prayer plume
holders of clay.
There are brown and white turkey feathers intact, and strange
ornaments
For the great high cave of the kiva deep-niched in the cliff,
Like a lost high altar of living in a ghostly cathedral whose transepts
are builded in air.

There are shadows of shadowy symbols of dead rituals,
Shadows of the dancers' plumes that felt brown feet that felt high
ladders,
And the hard, brown rocks of the valley when life was vivid and
good to them;
Till the last lone fire at the foot of the cliff died out on a dead
black winter's night,
And the last lost wailing echo of living sang to it,
And to life that writes in shadowy symbols, broken pictures, dying
men and gospels misspelled,
In Tyuonyi even as Jerusalem.

Santa Fé 12 30 18

THE ALCOVE

The light streams down from above through a gray wire glass sky light,
Like cloudy light that falls in a shadowy sea cave,
Where pearls and corals glow, and abalones slowly open living opals,
Near flame-tipped sea shells, obscured by sea-green sea weed and great red sea fans,
Under the feathery shimmering shifting of frondage, water, color and light,
The hard, brown rock stands out like tie ribs of being.

The ocean shimmers through the hues of translucent canvases;
In a stirless tide of air that floods the Grand Canyon's terraced abysses,
Through frail and rifted veils of mist that drift apart and reveal;
Opals and pearls and dead red spoils of fossil centuries,
Far-flung treasure of Titans washed by the waves
Round points and bays and hazy purple coasts of sunset and sunrise.

It beats round the high piled massive of the silent mountains of Taos,
Like a tall sea island rising between the tide and the sky,
Out of a great gray plain toward the cloud drift of spent whirlwinds,
Eddying, swirling slowly till the hills lift up their hands,
And strain down snow and rain that the spring may blossom again.
And the rocks that wrestle with heaven for a parapet for far plains,
Stand in strong blues and sage grays as a strong sea island stands through ages.

The ocean rises and flowers again in April through new fruit trees,
Ghosts of dead seas and seasons that spread and lapped through the valleys rise with the swelling of sap.
Apple trees blossom in spray, and peach trees raise pink swirls of fire.
Below them snow still lingers in blue shadows as polar as shades of icebergs in sea lanes,
In the lee of the low gray adobes with red peppers still hanging by the doors.

The ocean moulded the walls of these churches,
Of Ranchos de Taos that stands like a rock sea-flung by Spain towards the north and the mountains,
Weathered and rounded, storm beaten by years,
Of the shadow netted Sanctuario by Chimayo,

Soaking in light in the hills like a sponge that clings to the cleft of
a reef;
And of the brown cathedral corner tower in Santa Fe,
Like a crumbling shore rock bastion of a faith today forgotten more
and more.

The ocean moulded the growth of flat acres of grease weed,
Like a low sea forest raised from the ooze to the sunlight,
Where salt gray waves once rippled and slowly drained away.
The ocean shaped the trees that veil and reveal wide mountain vistas,
Poplars pointed like rocks and cottonwoods spreading like sea weed,
With fingers of tides in the veins of each leaf, and the spreading of
eddies in circles concentric of years hid in gray trunks.

The ocean moulded the hand and the mind of the man who made
these pictures,

Out of its salt spring of being that knows not dying or dry rot,
That ripples and wells through the ages of sunlight and starlight and
moonlight.
It moulded and made and sent him to silently preach to the people,
In this small side chapel of service unceasing in today's gray cathedral,
Where men light pictures to God instead of candles and lamps,
Silently preaching the rhythm and the flow and the glow of the tides
of all living
Till the hand of the painter is dust, and his mind is a mist in the
midnight,
And the gleam of the strength in his soul like a pearl in a sea cave
In a gray little alcove of time is a treasure of light that remains.

Santa Fé 11 24 18

PALACE UNDERTAKING PARLORS

Late at night, next to the post office,
A huge square window with one crack in it gapes darkly,
Like the black mouth of a cave of death where silence whispers
All lost horrors of the past, and today's last hopelessness.

Two green shaded lamps like the eyes of a monster that menaces,
Look past undrawn shades for people that pass in the street,
Passing oblivious, restless, foreboding, horror-seized
Hundreds and thousands of times, at noon and at midnight,
To come here, sooner or later.

By those two lamps two men are sittng, keeping watch,
Always someone sitting, keeping watch,
Smoking, yawning, saying little and listening
For the tense ringing of a nerve-racked telephone,
Spring and summer, and autumn and winter.

This is the gate of despair, and of dreams that are nightmares.
And here the dead go first when they begin
The long, dark journey into deeper darkness,
Down a black funnel that narrows faster and faster
Through the grave's close trap-door to utter forgetfulness.

The men who sit here learned their craft in Egypt before the Pyramids.
They have made mummies before, and their eyes and their lips
Look out of the living mummy cases and whisper tonelessly,
As the priests of the dead at Luxor and Thebes whispered at night as they worked;
Taking the senseless shapes that women bore and loved, and men married and traded with,
Hiding horror and disease and the taint of tears in soft wrappings of silence.

People who lie awake with nerves that twitch, go by and shudder.
But a child pauses and looks at the two green lights and longs for them.
And a man with a heart like a cracked egg shell, edges night after night nearer the great cracked window glass,
Finding there before him the rest that he craves and needs,
Knowing that in all the world this one dim room belongs to him.
And his tired heart tells him,
Death is one breath in an endless march of interminable atoms;
Through night's long passionless ecstacy.

Santa Fé 2 12 19

THE CORNER DRUG STORE

The children love to come here,
To sit on high wire stools before the big mirror,
To hear the soda fountain sizzle and squirt,
To play with straws and bubbles in tall glasses,
And swallow frozen ecstacy by lingering spoonfulls.

Here is one place where all are children,
At one time or another, sooner or later,
Sundays or holidays, particularly so
Since the town and the state went dry last October.

We are children before the news stands between two big front windows,
Like a flashy display of children's toys at Xmas time,
Where we see ourselves mirrored in toy magazines for toy people,
And cheaper Sunday papers from Denver and Los Angeles.

We are children at the candy counter.
We are children in a corner near the big mirror,
Stocked to start ten beauty factories, wholesale; working overtime,
With lip sticks and potted rouge, cold creams and face washes,
Talcum powder, radium soap, liquid shampoo, hair removers,
Blue Jay corn plasters, rubber reducers, electric vibrators,
And superfluous vanity bags for superfluous women,
Little walking vanity bags themselves of small envies and appetites,
And small spoiled children.

Tragedy walks here too among the children,
As a huge cowman or sheriff's deputy walks with a six-gun half hidden.
Tragedy comes on tiptoe to a telephone and whispers tensely.
Tragedy stands twitching by a prescription counter watching his watch.
Tragedy smiles thin-lipped at a friend, and stifles a cough,
Hurrying away with a bottle of Scott's Emulsion hidden in a muff.
Tragedy feels a truss, and hungrily watches the children.
Tragedy comes with a face no sane man might marry, and frowns at them:

At the children for whom all our drugs and vanities are devised,
The children for whom we close saloons and nursery windows, and make war and peace,
The children who come here as their elders come here;

From lonely ranch houses, shadowed adobes, furnished rooms, hotel lobbies, toy town houses,
To buy aspirin and frayed aspiration in a rag time phonograph record,
To buy patent medicines and patent appliances for killing time and ring worms and cockroaches,
For curing boils and boredom, facial defects and soul insufficiencies;

To our temple of gossip and healing of all ills real and imaginary,
To sit on a stool by a counter and swing their legs as the children do,
To see life a spectacle and a drama, half guessed and half hoped for,
To watch it without them and in them in a great big mirror before them—
On Sundays—and weekdays—and holidays.

Santa Fé 12 8 18

ROSARIO'S

At the end of the street, on the roof of the shop, backed by blue sky,
An old gray Mexican ox-cart stands on solid wheels hand-sawed from logs that sawed the desert.
Below in the ghost shop's windows are wampum and arrow heads,
Spear heads and cherts of flint and black obsidian, bleakly mingled
With Navajo bracelets and rings beaten and punched from dead Mexican dollars.
Pottery rain-gods with eyes of dead men peer at you.

Inside in deep shadows are piles of dusty blankets,
Woven by long dead hands that paled as the wool sucked out
All the color from old lives till the last red thread was lost in grayness.
Long lost Navaho sheep and Mexican flocks near Chimayo
Fed and their blood beat red, and these stripes and wedges are left of them.
Snow and midnight mix in one and the colors of springtime and sunset
Live in a rainbow web of wool that Rosario spreads on the floor.

Pottery from Zuni, Zia, Acoma, Laguna, clutters the dusty tables,
With painted shadows of flowers and leaves and birds and chain-lightning.
Great black lustrous jars from San Juan and Santa Clara overshadow
Hopi ladles and bowls, yellow and brown like the rocks of the mesas.
Heavy stencil-like patterns of fire and night from San Ildefonso and San Domingo mix
With crude Tesuque ash trays and little clay birds and animals,
Striped, smeared, absurd, wierd, and naively bewitching,
And black and gray prehistoric bowls unglazed, crooked, coil-woven.

There are baskets hanging from rafters, baskets on floor and walls;
Big Navaho marriage baskets with their mountains of upper and lower worlds,
Black and white trays, Pima and Apache, spotted with shapes of small men and Gila monsters,
Hopi placques, coarse of weave, some low-keyed, and some like fire and sapphire,
Rotting bottoms of baskets made by hands that died a thousand years ago.
And two frayed sandal heels of yucca fibre from an Otowi mummy a thousand years older.

Painted saw-edged dance sticks ending in birds and burros crowd
Buckskin and bead-tagged pouches and purses in dusty show cases.
Hopi Kachinas, masks and dolls, and shamans' dead magic are jumbled
With carved and tinted tablitas, tall wooden tiaras for dances of dead men,
And dead children's tufted rattles like slim war clubs of dim warriors with dyed hide sewn on them.

In a corner a tall war drum blue and yellow as bare torsos of dead dancers,
Stands beside a scarred metate that ground ghosts' blue corn and yellow corn.
There are horse hair quirts and leather quirts and belts of long dead riders,
With the wicked Mexican spurs and the silver bossed and the braided bridles,
And saucers filled with beads and coral, turquoise and opal and Mexican money.

There is a huge old dusty safe that Rosario opens slowly,
Where he hides dim writings of men long dead, and trinkets and jewels of long dead women,
Names written large in three races' history, and mystery magnetized and tangible,
In great Navaho silver bead necklaces with squash flower spurs, and in crosses and swastikas,
Worn gold for fleshless fingers, and thin ear-loops for ears that hear nothing.

He has old seals that stamped power on yellow papers,
Cut by Greeks in Rome in the image of Rome's first emperors,
And one that came down through a pope and a king and a viceroy, reveals Rosario's profile,
Hard and shrewd and old as a Latin and an Indian, and loving all things
That have gray power in themselves to make their keepers fit for them.
And Rosario stands with his ghosts in his hands like a priest of the past,
And a ghost of the pride and the power of Spain and the Pueblos that perishing persist here.

Santa Fé 1 29 19

SAN MIGUEL

The old Catholic college has a gray stone front of many windows.
And I sometimes wonder where the eyes are that looked out of them,
Little fledgling priests that were homesick often and lonely,
Knowing as little of the world as a babe unborn and resenting it.

Compline, vespers and matins, and the length of interminable litanies,
Fasts and penance and prayers, forever, one after the other,
Midnight masses and early wakings in winter, and stories and lessons to be learned
Of saints in torment, tormented by a God men worshipped tormenting them,
Stories that spoiled the summer sun, and made the spring a mockery.

The little boy priests went harnessed in black and harrassed
By memories of autumn days when apples dropped in their mothers' laps,
Long mornings on mountains when they found the pinyon nuts and pitched their fingers husking them,
Days when they watched lean horses and colts like a merry-go-round on shining circus days, thrashing dry wheat,
When dust and chaff hung high in air in yellow beams of sunlight dancing for them.

They have gathered ripe grain for the threshing in the chapel and the cloisters,
Where gray faced priests go round and round, black shadows of God and shamans of midnight,
Pondering a pit of eternity, and heirs to all the terrors and torments of the ages.
And the dim contagion grows where they shut up boys beside them,
And drive lean horses of habit round and round, day by day on their lives.

The old Catholic college is a gray barracks of bitterness.
But birds build nests around it, the sun and moon regard it,
As it looks across the valley to old gray stone walls of the State Penitentiary.
And I like better to think of eyes looking out of its windows at birds winging to the mountains,
Than of the downcast lids that serve life sentences to habit here,
For worshiping shadows ceaselessly and wronging life with frayed rituals.

Santa Fé 11 18 18

THE OLDEST CHURCH

There was a cross in the open here where the Padres planted Christ's
standard,
Dusty foot-soldiers of Spain and her church taking possession of the
land.
There was a cross of wood and a new strange shadow on the hills,
And a deepening shade in the minds and wild hearts
Of the Pueblos and nomads who watched it and hated it.

There was a cross of metal in old San Miguel
Before the Pilgrims set foot in the fog at Provincetown.
There was a cross of metal in a cage of sun-dried mud,
A cage that was made when metal first was forged and before it,
When the first cavemen builders roofed raw trenches, and carved
their rude dugouts.

There was a cage of shadows here, and the Indians hated it.
And they loved their kivas better, and there was bloodshed here,
When the great Pueblo rebellion rose in a long brown tidal wave,
And they stoned the priests and martyred them, and the robes of the
mass were rent and defiled,
Where a sunbeam brightens a gray clay wall, and a motor glides
past the last of the Trail to the Plaza.

There was a cross of metal in the sword hilt of each Conquistador
Who came and held the land and heard bronze bells and ate God's
body here,
In metal armor that gleamed in the light of tall pale guttering
candles.
And the men and the metal swords and lances, bits and spurs that
rode the land and rowelled it
Are lost like yesterday's snow, and these old mud walls and carved
roof beams outwore them.

There is a cross of wood in the open here on the tower of old San
Miguel,
Crowning a church like a slice of deeply eroded gray cliff or great
clay bank,
With two stone slanting butresses against the time-worn face of it,
Propping the walls of a tomb of the past with flowers like canticles
growing in front of it,
A crumbling tomb in an older dome of God's blue beauty embracing it.

Santa Fé 2 25 18

THE HAT SHOP

There is a telephone pole near the First National Bank that the horses have chewed.
Puye was standing tied there one day as I rode round the Plaza.
I pulled up Gray Leg and peered past the leaf-sprayed shade of the hat shop window.
Some one was standing inside with her profile pointing to a mirror,
As Mike Armijo's pointer Lal stands when she flushes a bird.

Some one was standing inside with one finger fussing with her curly hair,
In a brown leather hunting coat, tan riding breeks and wrap-puttees as symmetrical
As the sweet, slim curves their close spirals defined and clung to,
Some one with a hat in her hand and four more on the counter beside her,
Some one all curves that clung ,and melted and mingled in motion that sang to me.

She lifted the first, and she seemed to kiss and caress her small head with it.
Kings have been crowned with less splendor and pleasure in living.
She laid the red hat aside ,and the blue and yellow and lilac and black, and they all looked well on her.
And she frowned a little and dimpled and smiled, and they all looked well on her.
She sang a little softly, and shuddered at a hat of furred horror in the mirror behind her,
As forest things stooping and drinking from a river, shiver at fear in monstrous fur that is mirrored close behind them.

While she debated I discovered frontiers of the forest in the hat shop,
With its bare hat forms like empty bird nests scattered about it.
While she fluttered by the mirror like a bird that preens itself before a pool that smiles at it,
I believed that the first hats for women were singing birds' nests,
With a plume or two thrust through one side as they tried them on,
Naked and flushed and smiling as children who first discover beauty,
As they discovered their own images in pools that smiled at them, and barely knew them.

Santa Fé 12 5 18

THE TEA ROOM

There used to be a red parrot swingng over the doorway.
Time and the winds outwore it.
Now all the parrots are inside, but Vera Deane insists
They come with new novels in their muffs, and they go with stale gossip in their mouths
"My dear, you musn't quote me, but between you and me and that telephone pole"—

Some day a younger Homer will wrte an epic of small-town telephones.
They borrow the use of hers and she doesn't like it.
When she is busy behind the screen they start new scandals.
And the red parrots on the walls and chintzes chatter and sneer at them.
And the green parrots on the hand bells preen their painted feathers and grin at them.

She brings us tea in yellow cups on red and green tables.
Over the mellow brew they perpetrate eternal platitudes,
And scatter litle dry social lies as they crumble bread and cake crumbs.
They sip straw-colored complacency for the tame little snobs that they are.
And their souls are as brittle as china they chip, the lying little souls that they are.

She has made us a clearing house of small lies and smaller jealousies,
That she sells with her candies and her cakes, that we do not sufficiently thank her for.
For lies must be cleared as coffee must be cleared before the truth in them is fit to lie awake with.
And the wives clack back to their men at home and treat us more humanly for it.
And I saw a prettier girl, even than V. D. there yesterday,
And our tea room that tagged four divorced last year, has mothered eight weddings this winter already.

Santa Fé 10 22 18

THE BANK

They have gutted the Bank Saloon and sold the stock.
But they left the big game heads, and the glassy eyes look down
Where big men clinked down big silver dollars with big guns belted to them,
And drank big drinks of forty rod, and filled their hip pockets.

They had strong stuff like dynamite to get quick action when it was needed.
When the West was one great construction camp, and shoot slugs in strong men's guts;
To bore through blizzards with them, when the fit stood up and survived,
And the weak went to hell in a hurry, and a man tied tight to his friend.

Big men started big things here and planned bigger ones.
The army went and the cowmen came, prospectors plunked down nuggets,
And juggled quartz with sparks in it that set eight states afire,
And harnessed railroads to cities, and ditched and harvested deserts.

Shades of the shaggy old timers, trappers, hunters and trailsmen,
Section hands, congressmen, cowboys, governors, mule skinners, sheriffs, miners, state senators,
Linger here and look at shop girls with curls like Mae Marsh
Wrapping up boxes of candy fresh from Chicago for lungers from Boston in sombreros.

A cigar clerk watches two high school pool room boys piking at a punch-board by a soda fountain, formerly a bar,
And school girls dancing with the grandmothers between movie shows at the Paris,
On the floor where the tenderfeet walked in the air to the sound of the bullets splintering planks,
In this place that they call a cabaret, which is French today for a rubber-stamped dance hall.

New York 10 29 19

THE GARAGE

The gray stucco garage lies just back of the Plaza.
By the doors are two gay painted birds that the Pajarito cave men put on pottery.
Inside is a prison for speed with two greasy pits where they torture it.
And a boy at a vise on a grimy bench is filing new links for its fetters.

The boy at the bench has broken bronchos
And he feels as often as not that his motor cars are alive,
On his flat gray greasy stable floor standing still for him,
And lolloping by outside and ripping and snorting.

He thinks it is great to bridle something that bucks
With stuff that is stronger than rope or rawhide and cinch it.
He has been here only six weeks and he hasn't had time to get homesick
For the far dim ranges at dawn and the wind on the warpath.

It feels good to be here in the hot throbbing heart of the town,
To set a turn buckle on things, and to mix up with every one's life
To make of speed a modern commodity as simply sold
As the water one turns on and off in any one's bath room.

Out in the old livery stable yard they are staking an extension,
And burning up rickety stable hacks and sun-warped carriages,
That carried the passion and pathos of the past, and its crime and adventuring.
Through fifty years of the days that are done to its homes and hotels and the trains and the state capitol.

New York 10 29 19

THE SWIMMING POOL

There is a swimming pool in an orchard on a side hill,
With a rough stone rim around it, and limpid laughing water running and diving
From a sun-lit irrigation ditch, splashing and flashing into it.

The trees grow close around it and shelter and shade it,
Red barked apple trees, red as the clay of the path that tiptoes down
From the house where the girls are hidden, and the morning breathlessly waits for them.

Sunrise lingers to see them running lightly on tiptoe,
Slim as two boys in their trim boys' bathing suits that cling to them,
Down the red path where white apple petals fall on them lingering.

Birds in the branches sing to them, the lights and the shadows bring to them,
Something soft as a butterfly's touch, and the swish of flowers and dew on swift bare arms and feet,
Feeling earth and air as they fleet; and the flicker of wings, of leaves and of light all thrill in them.

Branch tips touch them brushing by, breezes clutch their lips and their hair.
The color of the sky and the scent of the day is sweet to them while she still is a girl to greet them.
And the water ripples to meet them, and splashes and flashes and dimples and plays with them.

The sun climbs high to spy on them and to dry their hair as side by side
They sit on the round stone rim of the pool with their little toes tickling the water.
And they laugh at the light and new nests in the trees and a little gray kitten that cralws to them.

The snow of the mountain comes closer today like the warmth of the spring to them,
Like the buds that burst, the petals that fall, the sap that rises, the grass that grows, the breeze that blows, the scent and the song that flows to them,
And every spring of all time is a pulse that quickens, a voice that wakens, a smile that trembles in them.

For life today in Santa Fé on the last day of April,
Is a girl half naked and wholly happy smiling and sunning herself
On the mountain rim of a world of light and the sky's high bright blue swimming pool.

Santa Fé 2 28 19

THE STUDIO

There is a great gray north window and a big red brick open fire place,
With a noble red brick shelf above the fire hole bearing pipes, Hopi and Tesque pottery, rain gods and ash trays.
There are coal black jars of San Juan with pussy willows in them on the adobe window ledge,
And a painted jar from Zia crowded with brushes to the right of them,
Between them red, blue, yellow, and speckled ears of corn and twisted paint tubes,
And beyond them a hillside of snow and a sky too gray for painting.

On a small table by the fire stands a green typewriter backed by a yellow placque from the Second Mesa.
A larger table by the window is stacked with books, papers, ink, tobacco, hunting knives and photograph prints and plates.
There are two tall easels splashed with paint in front of a desk and a gramaphone cabinet.
One of them bears a thumb box sketch of a canyon road with a big blue mountain beyond it;
And that road goes winding away all night and day to new wonderlands.

One of them carries a great brown picture of the Pueblo at Santa Clara,
With three clay bee hive ovens in the foreground grouped like three mountain peaks.
And the blue and green mountains beyond them carry the lines and contours of the Pueblo roof line to the sky line.
There are streaky shadows of vigas, and slanting ladders and scaffolds like well sweeps.
And the blue of a rifted sky comes back to blue shadows that seep through the ground.

A black and white dog sprawls slack by a fire that smoulders gray and black.
A man in khaki with a brindled cat in his lap writes on blue paper.
A man with a grizzled beard and a big pipe in it clatters at his table in the corner.
For today is too gray to paint in his laboratory of light in the hills.
The experiment smoulders like the fire while he fusses with old photograph plates,
Till the sun brings out new and brighter precipitates dripping from the tips of his brushes,
And the lenses of his eyes clear, as the great lens of the sky clears.

Santa Fé 12 18 18

CASA PINTADA

Around the long table with two stained wood benches,
We sat and ate and drank and spread out books and pictures;
Indian colored drawings inevitably authentic,
And tags of last year's New Art, already stale and ludicrous.

We opened books for two years with little wrangling.
252 volumes of New Poetry stacked on shelves or slung in corners,
22 varieties of monthlies, weeklies, dailies and quarterlies dribbling and quoting it.
We read proofs and smiled, or pinned ribald rhymes to them.

Poets and painters darkened the doors or tapped on the windows,
Poets cleaned pipes in corners, or orated in full focused candle light.
Poets and painters debated of Art and its Mission and their Mission interminably.
Poets lounged on the porch, and looked at sunsets and stars, and silently escaped to them.

One of them taken to task concerning his own stolid egotism,
Discoursed of painted women, painted houses, painted poets and painted painters briefly.
"The virtue of this gray adobe in the mountains", he said
"Is not the red strips of paints and the framed paint patterns on the walls.

"It is a house of life on the loma, for all its frivolities.
"People live here and grow, and come and go, and remember it.
"People are better than poems, and houses are better than pictures.
"Homes are better than art shops, and whoever talked shop in a dream?"

Santa Fé 12 14 18

THE OLD BELLS

Two old bells hanging in a garden back of the Sisters' Sanitarium,
Swung on a gray wood frame the height of my ears and my eyes.
I had passed them a hundred times before, and never discovered them.
One day from Gray Leg's back beyond the old adobe wall I watched
and wanted them.

Old bells that are silent make the most beautiful music,
Like lips that are dead and loved and kissed by time's slow shadows,
By the tender touch of the years and their children remembering
Something that dies and yet lives in the soul of all silences.

They thrill to the clangor of old days when they flung far their
challenge,
Heralds of the high God of Spain to the tribes of the hills and high
plains,
Tolling the people to prayers and dead masses for the dying.
Calling brown kinsfolk to weddings, they clapped their bronze heels
as they danced.

They live at the summit of life and then sank to quiescence.
Time has left them alone with the flowers and the winds and the sun
To whisper back to the birds, and ring back muted centuries,
When the snow falls softly and stirs them, or a butterfly poises on a
bell.

Santa Fé 12 20 18

THE BLIND WOOD CHOPPER

Where the Acequia Madre glides like a snake below the road,
In the shadow of a low adobe stable and a pile of logs man-high,
Big and brown, rotting and charred, with ridges of snow on their spines,
Backed by a cone-shaped foot-hill, through two spider fingered trees;

I saw a shape like an ape in stained overalls,
Crouching low at the end of a cross cut saw as long as himself.
He leaned on it, swaying it awkwardly, playing strange music,
With the rending of ore from rock and the crash of falling trees in it,
Till his big fiddle bow of steel had swept the last wet cutting away.

He laid the end of the log on the chip packed ground like a headless idol.
He seemed to kneel before it as his clean axe rose and fell,
Its keen edge always in line with a line through the middle of his head, his spine and his hands.
And the line through the middle of each round and half and quarter log was as clean
As the cleavage, timed and exact, of close set machinery.

When he had finished his stint he felt for his faggots and got up with them.
He went on over the water with one foot so close to the edge of the bridge,
Where no guard rail was, that I wanted to call out to him.
Children going to school passed him and followed him,
Making no more of him than the snow on the hills or the mud on the road,
Where my ape-man at last, erect and assured, was rounding the turn of the road.

Santa Fé 1 30 19

ARTURO

He wears a smeared red sweater.
His faded blue overalls gape at the knees.
His shoes are shaky.
His hat is dusty and black and half holes.

He walks into our kitchen and sniffs at it.
He walks into our dining room and looks at me.
He says to me, "Hello, hello, you bueno?"
And religiously I salute him in turn,
"Hello, Arturo, you bueno?"

His eyes are big and black.
His lips are large and Latin.
His nose is large and fit for smelling at
Meals his sister, Rosario, makes for us.
His face is large and it needs to be washed
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

His years are four and a half.
His face is the face of a masterful lover of living,
Wise without knowing it, equal to everything,
Slowly alert and sufficient to time and itself.
His stare is the stare of youngest New Mexico,
Pondering life in a puddle of sunlight,
Wondering what we painters and poets in Canyon Road make of it,
And what all this big world is about.

His eyes are two round interrogation points.
His voice is the echo of an older wisdom.
And I know some day or other,
When I am half the world away from Santa Fé,
In some land of the Latins where life is a matter of minutes and seconds, and centuries,
I shall see and hear him.

I shall have him coming, standing, pondering, questioning,
Like a lesser Pan and a faun and a hybrid of pixies and cherubim;
With his black eyes of life, and his small voice of life that insists and persists.
I am sure that at last I shall answer his slow repetition
"Hello, hello, you bueno, you bueno?
Arturo".

THE YELLOW KIVA

There is a sprawling yellow kiva in our little town,
With a ground plan looking like a great lop-sided H, stenciled by tribal tradition.
On forty-eight states, here and there, East and West, in ideographs crudely inconclusive.
Some of us say it stands for hell today; some have a hope it may mean heaven.

The cliff dwellers may have known better when they made their kiva capitals:
Round ,low-raftered, intimate, with room for a hearth fire in the midst.
We have tiled our larger lodges with tainted ballots, talking paper, dirty green backs, louder yellow backs.
Our State Capitol puts up a front; and falls down, when you look at it behind, like most Americans.

We have paid too much paper money and hard money for wide stair cases and long and lofty corridors,
Building a sounding box of Babel full of pigeon holes of purpose weakly standardized;
Dusty office rooms where time clock type writers transcribe quantity production; we have made the place a mill
For little shoddy private grafts, and public grabs of a state's greater greediness.

Boy orators orate in our Senate and our House; paid interpreters translate through two languages,
Latin to Nordic, and Nordic to Latin; Spanish and English mix as they can;
Smelting man, and metals unmined; tongues of smothered fire tire ears unresigned
To the endless wasting of words and time paid for, and loose power in our mountain power house.

Sometimes it seems the old kivas were better, with their hearth-fires for our fevered haste; and their well-weighed sentences,
As the peace pipe passed, of wise men who spoke, pondering their words, face to face;
Without middlemen or scare heads to exploit or distort the sense of the tribe and its purpose in time.
Sometimes it seems God Almighty's prize fools are those wiseacres in Washington who would civilize the Indian.

We were going away, and looked back at that power house of machine waste planted on our plateau.
Over it floated, faded in warm sunlight, the flag that means most to us, time-stained and rubber stamped;
Like one tattered wing of freedom we must fly with; somehow; somewhere; somehow we remembered
The old kivas' flag tipped ladders—till man's Ladder lifted there.

Santa Fé 4 29 21

THE PARIS

Paris blazed by night, bridging San Francisco Street.
Through part of the war we watched it and worried a little.
By day the letters paled in the beauty of the mountain west of it.
And Paris and the war were five thousand miles away from us.

We had not thought of the Paris of cow punchers and counter jumpers,
Fanning a cayuse through forty miles of moonlight, and wallowing desperately
Out of gray ruts of shop aisle and street, and dreamless staring and sleeping,
Or of the Paris of the old who have been there, and may not go back.

In a cold cave of germs where ill-washed people coughed and flirted
Once we saw Olive of the Studios caught in a great gray spider web
That some one flashed a light on, and she shook it with her posturing,
(Like live bait in a trap to tempt other girls like herself,
And a mannequin ghost for furs, frocks and motors they framed her in,)
Never to emerge from the net of quick returns, in color and light,
A voice that sang when it spoke, and a warm and vibrant reality,
Truer than herself and the startled hearts of her hearers.

"It's the Easiest Way all over again", said Irene. "Let's get out of this".
So for a year we soaked ourselves in the sun and snow on the mountains.
And we passed the Paris at times with eyebrows lifted and slightly superior,
We who knew Paris and the arts, and all men publish about them.

Thanksgiving night Pershing's Crusaders compelled us.
And something rose in our souls, and pushed its way and thudded
Through the pulsing hearts of the rest that pushed the Huns from Paris,
With shoulder thrusts at spaded earth, and beams bridging ruined rivers,
That rippled in a tide of living and lifted us.

Suddenly we perceived the purpose of this playhouse of starved people,
We who had starved for the great free swing of something high as the stars;

People who strive for Paris and the child in their hearts two nights
a week;
People who howl at custard pies slapped in your face, and are more
avid for adventure,
Even for farcial and thrilling acrobatics, than the vapidness of trade
vampires,
Thrilling a little to filmed wickedness of underworlds waked in
themselves and sickening of film sentiment.

We saw how stark contrast of light and shade come first in the
ground and growth of things,
Where the roots of the soul still struggle in the ruts and mud of the
road,
For earth had eyes before ears, and howls and shrieks before cadenced
voices and muted imaginings,

And Centaurs, Vikings, Attilas and Punchinellos, before Paris; and
these people
Were wiser for themselves than we were and the film spiders who
sold and seduced them.

For who has seen save by flashes at sunrise and sunset, the color
and flowering of heaven?
Or heard its voices yet but in swift and staggering action of cyclones
and thunder storms?
But we all see the stars at night on a screen of essential reality.
And we went out beneath them, and planned for Paris as we walked
through it.

Santa Fé 12 3 18

HOTEL DE OLID

We have called it a bleak old barracks, but it belongs to us.
It is bright enough when it waits for the midnight train from Lamy,
Gleaming from blackness like a porter's teeth in a desert-bound Pullman,
And like the car an ante-room to kings and queens that travel incognito.

Youth lay awake here all night devising miracles,
Love slept softly at last the happiest night of its honeymoon,
Romance marched up and down shadowy corridors marking mountains by moonlight.
Adventure stirred to a sunrise, and death the great adventurer set spurs at twilight.

History wrote new pregnant lines, and staged strange meetings above stairs.
Politics played queer tricks whenever the state legislature was in session.
Art could color its own, and science came seeking fossil wonderlands,
And keys to the truth of life that lived and died here before Columbus came and Coronado.

And the common people came, as still they come today,
To the winning of the West and the magic that still thrills in it.
And the townsfolk came to meet their friends and speed their parting,
Where once they danced all night, and nodded to eternal after dinner orators.

We have come from the dust of the desert and wallowed in its big white bath tubs,
We have loafed and written picture post cards, and scanned Indian blankets and pottery.
We have thrilled to news of war and peace, and idly wondered
Who was that man in miner's boots, and the girl with a face like Faustina's twin sister.

One night the lobby looked like a bank of life and a clearing house.
People came and went, and put tired bodies and souls in deposit,
To withdraw them next morning or three days later from vaults of sleep and of silence.
Once it seemed to us like a club of the country we stood in on sufferance.

Santa Fé 12 17 18

THE OLD ADOBE

A brown mud box some one dumped by the side of the street,
It stands where time left it and fancy forgot it,
With two smeared windows that squint on each side
Of a dark and toothless door and a doorstep that sags like a lip.

But childrens' eyes look out of its windows still.
People coming and going are a daily bread to it.
And the breath and the sound of life still comes from it,
Where two old women in dusty black stand by the sagging sill and
and whisper in the shadows.

They stand in the shadow of the past and smile at it.
They are living in longing and memory that walks with it,
Through the dear, dead days that are gone, now dearer than ever.
And the very voice and soul of the past that is pain and prophesy,
Stirs the dim lips that slowly part and smile at life and repeat:
"Buenos dias Señor. si, buenos dias Señor."

Santa Fé 11 7 18

PENITENTES

Ten half naked men are marching,
Like boys following their leader, flogging themselves,
In a staggering file down a stony trail near Taos.
Their yucca scourges drip and their drawers drip red on the stones.
Their brown backs are raw and rutted and slowly shuddering
With writhing nests of red snakes that feed and breed on them,
Like writhing snakes of blood in brains beating to bursting.

Little gray snakes of pain writhe and strike
In wild brown faces set and distorted like masks
Of something starker than bull-fights, burnings and rackings,
That persist and insist in pain's surgeons and Inquisitors.
This is the torture of self linked breath by breath, stride by stride, stroke by stroke,
Like the intimate tearing torture of lovers begetting birth pangs,
With the shuddering torture of brothers in blood's burning sacrament.

Their women follow, and shudder or thrill to them.
Children follow and whimper, but half grown boys are burning to begin.
Mothers look on and loathe it and women unwedded and ripe,
Fear and hate a greater cruelty than women's cruelty,
And a redder ritual than any woman's ritual,
And a wilder madness than any woman's madness,
As they march to the cross that stands at the end of their road of the cross.

There for a moment of suffering and torment,
Beside men and boys who gash themselves with cactus and writhe on heaps of it,
The supreme personage in this drama of pain that is older than all actors,
Pain and the will to pain that is old as blood is,
Old as the heart of life that stirs and beats and throbs and flogs in men and women,
Pulsing through their lips and tongues, and breasts and fingertips,
Through their maddest emotions and passion's pale and poignant intensities of tenderness:
Christ's old prototype, alive and adored today, Good Friday, in his valley by Taos,
Naked and ecstatic, is waiting for the rest of them.

Santa Fé 2 27 18

SANTA FE FORENOON

The foothills are striped with long shadows of little pinyon trees.
They are brindled, tufted, sleek and rounded.
And they seem to stretch ever so little,
Like cats half asleep in the sun—one yawns at me.

The little brown adobe houses perched between their paws,
Love them and cuddle closer to the earth they grow from.
The road to the canyon rising slowly and twisting,
Lies like a piece of tangled fishing line they have tired of playing with.

A lizard in the sun slides past with a flicker of his tail,
And a little river in a crease of the hills glides by as silently.
The grease-wood is gray again. Its yellow flowers have faded
To the tint of the cottonwoods faintly turning and barely swaying
Above gray trunks that dusty brown and tawny bronchos browse between.

And my thoughts are yawning thoughts that browse with them,
Past the smell of ripening apples in the orchards and the grease-wood by the wayside,
Past the purple lustre of cabbages in the garden where our red hens are hunting,
Past a dark green tide of alfalfa lapping past fence post after fence post,
Up to the red hillside of the stone crusher where the picks of convicts flicker on the skyline.

On the brown road ruled between the green alfalfa edge, and pinyon trees that tuft the ridge,
Two Mexican women in thin black skirts and shawls are tracking to town.
And behind them a brown boy and three gray burros,
With firewood bound round backs and flanks in huge brown horse shoes go silently.
And the whole is a frieze as old as the brown and umber vases of Mycenae and Corinth—and older.

There is a patina of days of dust and slow delight on this pattern of the world today.
There is a gray glaze like the glaze of olives and old olive trees in Italy on this brown and sun-burned pottery,
A gray glaze and patterning of shadow on walls and stones,
On garden soil and roadside and hillside.

And higher than all, and harder and softer in day's mirror
There burns a blue flame, cloudless and flawless, stirless and mellowing
The earth and all that grows from her, the yellow apples on the bough beside me,
And a million aspens turning yellow at last on a huge round shoulder toward Truchas.

And a mountain that I love, like a girl half waking,
Thrusts from the crumpled folds of the foot hills' spotted coverlet,
An elbow white and shining as the snows the clouds come close to,
And yawns—as she smiles—at me at the top of the morning.

Santa Fe 19 13 18

THE TOWER

There is no cloud in the world today.
And the sky is blue beyond belief or desire,
Blue light that knows no shadow; the horses stand motionless
High in the middle of the mountains, on the top of the tower of the world.

Round us the ranges run and eddy and circle.
Could one but creep past the last and peep from the parapet
Into the splendor of space without shadow or mist:
One might see stars for pebbles around the rounded rim, and the hollow below it
Of a pool of clear spring water with his own soul for a still face in it.

This is the tower of Maya; they pitched the blue sky for a tent on it.
And round the parapet sleeping lie the last shapes of illusion;
Mountain on mountain mixed and asleep in the sun's vast, silent seraglio;
Evereywhere breasts and hips of women, shoulders and flanks,
Stirless, strong and remote, the mothers of mothers forgotten and older
Than the first flower that bloomed or the first river that ran.

One could see sea nymphs there, bathing and basking,
Shapes that swim in the light and float on blue air like foam,
On the verge of the surf of the ranges where the great earth waves gather,
Billow and come like combers suddenly frozen and fixed;
Power and purpose that pulses eternally, shaped and reshaped.

Here the Kindler of stars colored the power of His purpose,
Drew from the sea its depth of shadow and sunlight,
Rippled the notes of Hs song that soars to a snow peak suddenly;
Falls to a valley and rests; here the Forger of words
Made for the dumb a sign till the fires of His forging were finished,
And set it spaciously forth to wait and bear witness,
Till the riders awake and arrive at this Vision of Maya's tower.

Santa Fe 11 2 18

STILL LIFE

Cold clear dawn on a world that wakes from huddled sleep—
A wide window sill lifted twelve inches to let in the day,
Six feet from my pillow at six; white sky, shadow cultures below
In a long oblong microscope slide that daybreak slowly focuses.

Static imensities emerge through the long blue profile of the main range,
Sloping slowly to the right in a sky line that sings and cannot cease.
Blue gray valleys of shadow and snow beyond grow more beautiful.
Below the low brown adobes flatten frosted roofs in parallel planes.

Leafless trees stenciled on the sky line lift to the levels of a massive of mountain tops,
Forming a net work for fancy that waits for birds winging back, singing spring—
Nests growing warm, living leaves of emerald cells netting together in new blue April weather.
Those frozen fringes sway ever so little, as a little cool breeze starts to eddy and stir.
One black bird, drifting down dawn, lights on a bare bough; and the sap stirs underneath.

Santa Fé 4 16 21

STAR SPRAY

My cot is set in the midst of mountains and stars.
The mountains are dull and low on a sky line flattened by starlight.
The stars are too many to count or confute, and I turn from them
To a peach tree, half stripped, that stands in the center of our orchard.

Our orchard is a garden of dreams, of stars tangled in fruit trees.
They are sheep caught in thickets,
They are apples of silver that shine,
They are birds that have homed to new nestings.
They are silver ships stranded in shadowy bays with jungles joining far margins.

Our orchard is a garden of truth, and star spray in fruit trees,
Like light filtered through to sea slugs on sea weeds in rock pools where the surf crashes thundering.
For we live in the shadow of a wave of all life that curls and imperils and impends.
And we live in the hollow of a pulsing of being that is breaking and rending us.

And jungles and sheep folds, passage of birds and landfalls of sailors are all crushed together and constrained
To the urge of an impulse that throbs overarching, and stresses far forelands of night,
Where meteors and stars are the froth and the foam of a comber of midnight that menaces
Earth and our orchard and island that crumbles, assailed
By the crash and the gride of the drift of the stars, and the beat of the surf of all being.

Santa Fé 1 4 1

WINTER MIDNIGHT

There are triptyches, panels, lunettes, in Holland, Paris, Italy;
That one might rent for a million or more for a life time.
But I could give them all if some painter would paint me perfectly
All that I see these moonlit nights from my tent's east gable,
In two tall triangles my leaning tent pole parts and marries.

It is all silver and white, gray and black with browns in it like half-charred charcoal;
The tent and the pole and the stubble of the field in the foreground,
The stripped fruit trees of the orchard with stars stabbing through them,
The white wreaths of snow that climb higher and farther through the foot hills,
And a lean sky line climbing past thin branches to a star poised near a peak in fathomless grayness.

It is all silent, cold and still.
And I wake and dream and wake to it again,
Till a faint gleam of gold from the forecourt of morning
Thrills in a gray adobe window to the right of me,
And flashes and beckons to the sunrise,
Waiting and welling behind that slate gray eastern range,
Waiting to leak and to flow and to flood and to pour past the peaks and the passes.

Santa Fé 11 22 18

WINTER MORNING

The sky is as gray as the glass of the studio window,
The telephone wires are thin black lines against it.
The trees are as thin and gray and brown
As sea weed in rock pools unstirred by one ripple.

The 'dobes huddle into the hillside,
Lying low and lean like a hungry dog asleep with his nose to the ground,
A spotted dog that is dirty white with the snow that still falls on him.
The pinyons are almost black and as cold as the rest of him.

A black wagon rolls slowly down the white road to Santa Fé,
With four small Mexicans huddled in cloaks and the driver's hands clutching like claws.
Two dun cows and a brown horse browse in the greasewood by the river
Sucking the dry dugs of earth, and their throats throb with the weight of her.

A yellow dog snuffs out a cold trail through the greasewood,
The gray greasewood with snow-white flowers that bloomed afresh this morning.
A black broncho in a gray blanket with a trailing lariat runs kicking and bucking to the river,
Trying to buck off the blanket of gray silence that sinks and wraps the world today,

Nine blackbirds, like living notes escaped from the scale of slim bars
Of frost rimed telephone wires, are darting and dancing
Against the wide gray sky and the high white hillside,
Like soaring chords of a song that leaps and lilts and persists:
As swinging, singing wings beat up against the thin and slowly sifted snowflakes.

Santa Fé 11 24 18

WINTER NOON

Gray Leg wound on and up in a snail shell spiral,
Round a round brown hill that looked to me like a sea snail.
He dipped down through a high arroyo of snow and red rocks.
He slipped on the cold north side of a horse shoe ridge that rose,
Like a giant fossil from the sea, stranded and frozen on top of the foot hills.

He found an old trail that angled faintly.
And he sawed back and forth and he jerked on and up,
Past little red rocks and little green trees and white patches of snow,
With his brown sides heaving and his heart beating between my legs when we halted.
We started again and we mounted past the last brown bulge of the ground.
And I swung him around to the west at last, and we watched all time together.

We stood on the scarp of the world, and below us
A wide brown beach spread past red buttes like rocks tumbling seaward.
Below on upland levels toward Bernalillo the snow lay white and shining,
Like sea sand wet by tides and sea ice thrusting landward
Past snow-capped rocks that were the peaks of farther ranges.
And the sun blazed out on it in golden channels like fiery water flowing and rending the floe pack.
Beyond lay the lights and shadows and snow berg summits of still greater ranges.

And the sun rose higher and higher.
And the tide of life like liquid fire was widening,
As the tide of white before it rose and widened,
Rose from the sea and spread and fell in air waves whose fringes were snow flakes.
The sun at noon blazed down on a snow fringed rock pool
That the sea once made; and the waves of a greater sea
That washed the whole world like an island when time was a babe in its womb,
And the glaciers were the scouring of the long slow surf in it.
And the ocean today is the dregs and blue ooze of it.

The clear air freshened around us,
And played with Gray Leg's mane and our nostrils widened.
My eyes widened and my thought grew greater at the sense and the thought of it
As the world grew wider, and the air grew wider, and life grew greater interminably,
Till all the sea was one rock pool;
And main ranges low rock ridges of New Mexico under the sea,
That plainsmen blindly believed long since had deserted us;
The sea that was here, and is here, and will be
When earth like a wave-washed rock topples down to be ground round to atoms.

And I saw the sun in the sky, and I saw new clouds in blue water,
Little light flecks of foam, each slight and white as a snow flake.

And I knew that this snow was the froth of one wave in an eddy's little tumult of air.
And I breathed in one breath and one drop of a wave wide as ocean and wider,
That lifts to the light of the sun, and ebbs to the deepest pits of night,
And knows neither tide marks nor margin beside or beyond them;
That leaves our gray mountains like tangled tide ridges of sand,
For a day on the way of all living, on the quest and unrest of the sea born slow spirit of man.

Santa Fé 12 10 18

THE RIDE HOME

We rode home last night by the river.
Turning to the right at the iron bridge with its frost rimed planks,
We galloped by high banks till your flying shadow was lost
In the matted shade of leafless ranks of willows.
And I watched you bend and sway as Gray Leg threaded through them.

We forded narrow channels where cold water gleamed and wavered
Through a waste of sand and scrub where your shadow toiled like the feet of the horses,
Through shapeless pools of dusk as cool and dry and shifting as sand,
Where the shadows of the rocks were painted on white ice rims and snow islands,
On the edge of a grease-wood pasture: and once more the willows swallowed us.

We emerged in the middle of a valley that widened and climbed,
Rising softly to meet the mountains as your breast sometimes breathes to them.
And the moon was an open well head with all the silver in heaven
Spilling straight down on your spurs and the bits of your bridle,
Rippling away with the wash of the river, and the starlight leaked through it.

I let you ride before me: I wanted to watch you.
With your slim ,straight back and shoulders, boylike and beautiful
As your body that gripped your horse and silently swayed him;
So your spirit sways your heart; you rode and you never looked back.
And I followed your shadow that followed you, and loved it.

Through a corridor of mountains that opened on the stars
We rode without speaking a word and all the while we were drinking in
The silver flood of moonlight that made the night a miracle.
And I wanted to go straight on and follow you
Riding forever through space to the rim of the range and beyond.
There in the air was our empire, and there we went riding,
Riding on the moonlight rim of a planet that galloped through the night.

Santa Fé 11 18 18

RITO DEL FRIJOLES

The Spaniards called it Pajarito because they saw ther
Greater colonies of swallows' nests in taller mud banks,
Where caves star the cliffs and the canyons run to the river.
But something stronger and stranger lingers here like an echo,
Like the sound of dry waters that run below these last year's nests of stone.

The winds first sang here, dancing on rock pools and dizzy ledges.
They ground grit in rock crevices in airy whirlpools.
The caves grew and remained till men found and fashioned them.
There was a sound of chipping of stone on stone, and of fragments falling.
There was a sound of felling of trees with stone axes.
There was a hoisting of vigas home and a building of balconies.

The women ground blue corn in querns and sang to the grinding.
They made sandals of cactus fibre and wove baskets of reeds and grasses.
The hunters brought deer meat home and the old men dried it.
Boys stoned rabbits, girls made warm robes from furry skins sewed fast with sinews.
Men found eagles' feathers that they traded for turquoise and obsidian for arrow heads.
They made their first black pots from snakes of clay coiled outward and upwards.
They harnessed the river with trenches, they stabbed the earth and pitted it with seed corn.

They made ladders of tree trunks that leaned and led to their great high cave of ceremony,
With its rock half dome that shadowed the stone kiva they built there,
Round and barely above ground like a bird's nest till they covered it,
Lest any should lightly see their threshold to the underworld,
Sunk in the center of the floor, that spirits like serpents come crawling through.

They were primitive people, closer than today to their origins.
Their racial memories reached to days when the first birds were flying snakes with scales, and men fought them with flints and sling stones.

They pictured birds on their pottery. they carved them on rocks and cliffs in petroglyphs.
They saw serpents in the windings of rivers and the twistings of trails.
The Avanyu, the great winged serpent, was the guardian of all springs and water sources.
When he was angered they dried and men died, and his ways were past determining.
They worshiped the eagles that fed on serpents before the Aztecs, their fathers, revered them.

They were a bird-like people who fled from the tribes of the plains of torment.
But steel and powder flew faster, and the swift horses of the Spaniards rode at them.
On them Apaches and Navahoes who had crawled like serpents stalking them, were winds to winnow them.
They cut the trails to the fields, and the water trails and the hunting trails.
Meanwhile the Avanyu was angered, and the water died and the people died.
For they had no wings like the birds who flew to new nests and full drinking pools.

The sky was blue above them, cloudless, rainless, merciless.
The rocks were as hard as before and as gray with no help or hope in them,
The sun was bright as before, and it burned and tortured them.
The snow was white when it fell like one breath of cool air on the fire of their fever and hunger.
The wind was as free as before on wild nights when it hooted and yelled at them.
The birds were free as before, their song was as sweet as before and rarer and dearer.
And the last lovers clasped lean hands and lips, and the last old women wailed for the last child of the tribe and the ending of all things.
The last water went with the last echo of its falling, the last fire fell with the last eyes that looked at it.
And the serpents of shadow silently stole into the place and possessed it;
Till the white man came at last and cleared out drift-filled caves, and filled the empty city with his dreams of it.

Santa Fé 11 2 18

CORN DANCE, SAN DOMINGO

Motors are planted in ranks in gray dust by a dusty gray church.
Motors are plowing the roads from Santa Fé to Bernalillo.
Horses are dancing along the dusty roads through the sand hills,
Indians on sorrel and paint ponies come trotting down distant trails.
Mexican teams and toy burros are pushing through the crowd on foot to the Fiesta.

Mass is still being sung; through the open door one discerns
Shadowy worshippers kneeling and rising in ranks to slow chanting.
Mexicans set up shop in stands, south of the Plaza and sell
Candy, quirts, cigarettes, soap, Navajo bracelets and rings and raw turquoise.
Indian women in dim doorways lift mottled pottery and toy bows and arrows.
Children bring firewood and apples, and smoke rises fast from gay chimney pots.

In the great square of South and North, of the summer and winter peoples,
The crowd is gathering and black heads are showing in hatchways of kivas,
Like huge butt ends of logs protruding from earth and coated with it.
Ladder ends slant from low tops with red feathered pennants at their tips.
The church disgorges at last a crowd chromatic and intense.
More and more heads of dancers are massed on kiva tops, looking around.
Past the throng on the ground to strangers and friends crowning long roofs and crowding strong ladders.

Domingo's Koshare appear like old heralds of tribal tradition.
Green corn sheaves bound round their ears, black spots daubed on white bodies.
North, South, East and West they start to report the land is safe for the harvest.
One by one they return to begin the abundant fun of full harvest,
When old gray grandsires frisk and grin, and each bin is full of speckled blue ears;
And good spirits have smiled on the harvest.

Three hundred men and women begin to dance the great dance of the harvest.
They come pair by pair in line like planted corn and they hold green sprigs of pine.
And the rattle of elk teeth rattles and silvery sleigh bells simulates,
The cackle of the pregnant corn in great heat, and the swish of winds like the swish of flames through corn fields.
The women's black blankets are earth, and the long tassels of the men's trailing waist scarves
Are trailing tassels of corn that is born of the heat of the harvest.

They shuffle like the first slow days of faint green growth of the harvest.
They circle and eddy as the suns and shadows of green growing circle and eddy;
They stamp with furred feet and claws of wild things that crept and ran through the ranks of the harvest.
They tramp with the dull weight of days that bore down hour by hour in great heat.
And always the turpuoise green tablitas, tall woolen tiaras of the dancing women,
Are the blue green tips of growing corn, and swaying flickering spear heads of harvest.

They halt like the sultry heat of high noon in mid summer,
When the corn grows high though all earth is still, and stands still as it grows;
Till a wave of slow chanting and clamor of long drums stirs them again
As low thunder stirs a sultry sky, and low drumming of rain comes closer and closer,
To hearts that beat high in July growing glad in the hope of the harvest.

All day they advance and retreat through the heat of the dance of the harvest:
Till the last motor rolls away, the last cowboy rides away, and the Mexican and Navajo riders,
Like a painted frieze that flamed above the horses' heads, and the dancers' tablitas,
Are scattered like colors of sunset; and the Plaza lies shadowed and dun:
And the last old Indian woman lets down her rusty sun umbrella,
And lets herself heavily down a long and dusty ladder,
To the feasting already begun, in glad homes of corn harvesting.

Santa Fé 12 1 15

THE HERITAGE

She wanted to go to a hut hospital on the western front.
Because she got sick herself they would not let her.
Then came the influenza, and in the midst of it
She found a western front of her own, right here at home,
Somewhere in northern New Mexico.

Some of us know New Mexico as a land of beauty,
A land of color, of romance, of mountains and mystery,
A place for hunting, fishing, riding, climbing and motoring;
A land of prehistoric ruins and ruins since the Spaniards came,
Of cliff dwellings, terraced houses, Pueblo dances and dim rituals;
A land of rattlesnakes and sage brush and red and black traditions,
Of grim Penitentes who scourge and crucify themselves afresh on each Good Friday.

Few of us know New Mexico as a land of squalor and gray ignorance,
Of hidden villages and lone adobes where life is hard as it was in the ages of flint and of bronze,
Of little efforts to live as pitiful as winter starved horses
Wandering through spring time, staggering and dying
In the running of new waters and the blossoming of fruit trees,
In the blue of April's beauty and her showers of pink and white.

But she knew them because they belonged to her;
Hard by the valley of beauty, around the bend in the road,
In the shadows of low foot hills in the windings of little rivers,
In the sands of parched arroyos and dry ditches where the sickness lay heavy on the land.

Little pitiful stories came to her by word of mouth,
Of dead and dying mothers and babies starving and neglected,
Of infected houses and infected wounds, and sores that spread as the sickness spread,
And because she cured one, and word of it spread, they sent for her and trusted her;
People who never know a doctor from birth to death, because there are no doctors to seek them out and succor them;
People who live and die as the beasts die,
People who yet are human and remember her and love her.

She went with her mother and her little brown horse and mountain wagon,
And her big knitting bag full of bandages and pads, lysol and aspirin and little bottles and tubes.
She went with a white mask soaked in alcohol, and a love that was her whiter disinfectant.
And they could not see her face clearly, but they knew the light in her eyes.
And they felt the healing in her hands in the shadows of dark houses and adored her.

She went by day and night, in the magic of the moonlight on the mountains,
Through the splendor of blue days, and golden sunlight glad and dear as the warm breath of life itself.
Through a mountain world, and a warm mould of beauty that was made for beauty and belonged to her,
Through a moonlit world of cooler, tenderer shadows of the truth that beauty barely breathes and promises.
And from it all she took them something lasting in herself that they believed in and remember,
Part of her heritage and theirs that life's true lovers share in shadowed sacraments in France and somewhere on life's lonliest firing line.
This is the only real religion in the world that men and women live and love and die by and remember.

Santa Fé 11 12 18

THE TRAIL MENDER

We came back from the summit where snow rifts in August.
We scraped past rock stairs, we slithered over shale slopes.
We thrashed through aspen thickets where the horses nipped dry grasses.
We stroked down the spine of a ridge and stopped to tighten cinches.

We slid down guttered channels where the trail angled sharply,
And twisted and snarled through great gnarled roots that held it clinging
To the sides of a funnel in the hills; we plunged down shuddering sand slopes,
Till Puye stretched his steaming neck to the gleam of a stream in a canyon.

Here there was quiet stirred alone by the splash of water that rippled
From rock pool to rock pool; from shade pool to shade pool we threaded,
Where the cotton woods stand in gray islands in seas of green grasses.
And the trail wound brown between them, shining and warm in the sun.

Near a six-inch ditch that brings living water from the Rito
Round a harsh hill shoulder evenly, we saw a lunger at work.
Slowly he stooped, and with infinite care he pried and he lifted at
A little dry pine tree wind-cast across the trail in the night.
We were past before he had levered it down hill to suit him.
I looked back and saw him picking up stones and trimming trailing branches
That slap one straight in the eyes, and stooping again and again.
And every line of his tired body was a line of life's gospel telling me:

"Others may tread the high trails, taking earth by the throat on the way.
They may breathe in half the sky at one stride but I cannot.
They may seize the summits in turn like posts boys vault past at leap-frog,
And watch all the wonder of the world suddenly spread at their feet, but I may not.

Others scrape hand holds to see lightnings splintered on lone summits,
Or feel the flail of hail and sleet on razor-edged ridges; but I
Am grateful that life lets me live by great trees and green glades and bright waters,
Smoothing the way for the weak, and the strong that stumble and trip in the night."

On the trail we all are keepers of.

GOATS

White, gray, brown, black, the goats track by together,
Blending over and flowing around baby arroyos and humps in the hills,
Like a brindled patch on the hide and the play of lean muscles on the back
Of a sharp-nosed dog that pens them in the open persistently.

They browse by old trails and the strength of the earth flows into them.
The blue sky, the brown hills and the gray weeds are one with them.
The she-goats chew their food and the sagging udders are filled,
And the dog and his master are drift on the weight of the wave that moves with them.

It ripples through worn channels and runnels in the hills.
And the tide turns back at twilight and the goats go home again,
With white milk for brown babiels, white sunlight liquid and warm.
And the strength that they strained out of chinks in the rocks is strained again
Into little, glad, greedy lips that lap, till the lips of brown mothers drink love deeply.

Santa Fé 11 11 18

COYOTE

He howls in the hunger of winter,
Where a starved moon sinks into nothingness,
Near an earth scabbed with shadow and leprous
With livid patches of silver along her thin shoulders and flanks.

He howls as a leper howls
When health and wholeness and human touch are taken from him.
He howls as evil men must howl in evil dreams,
Seeing lost happiness they maimed and murdered.
He howls as a blind man howls when his eyes are put out.
He howls as madmen howl at shifting shapes that trick and betray them.
He howls as devils howl when Hell damns the innocent.

He howls when the earth is sick and mad in wan winter moonlight,
When ghosts walk thick, and wake and stir at the sound
Of his long, laughing, wailing mocking, yelling ululations.
He howls like a leper, a devil, a dead man, a blind man, a bad man, a mad man.
He howls with the wailing of the winds and low laughter of snow trolls that rick men to murder them.

Santa Fé 12 8 18

PROCESSIONAL

Coming down hill from Casa Pintada, past the Acequia Madre,
Suddenly appeared at the end of the street plodding down Canyon Road,
Five little white brides of Mary in procession, two women in black walked behind them;
Five little girls bearing flowers in glass vases, and two women with yellow candles in their hands.

Carrying candles in white and red bouquets, candles unlit the shade of pale gold;
Going in golden sunlight to the great church of St. Francis. they went down through brown dust, through the mothers' month of May
To the motherhood of Mary, of our Lady of Love who smiles mildly
On all mothers and girls who go to her, and those others whose smiles is spring.

Santa Fé 5 4 21

THE DIMPLE

I have learned to love this land,
As one loves the body of a woman one begins to possess,
And the clouds in the skies that change and make her subtle and wonderful.

I love the swells and the troughs like the sea of her sky line,
The sudden hollows and circling eddies of earth lying sunken and shadowed
By the crest of the ranges.

One day I found a dimple in the earth with flowers that thrilled in it,
Behind a hill that hid it like yesterday's dear secret.
And I made it a shadowy, dreamy funnel of delight and of peace that poured into me.

Why should people think it any more shameful to love
The dimples in a woman's body, behind her knees, below her shoulders,
And in every fair and fertile fold of her;
Than those in her cheeks and her chin?

Santa Fé 3 4 17

THE SPRING

The springs are hard to find
In this old brown land of ours.
But I know one that I found one day in November,
High on the breast of a hill
Heaving out of canyon,
Like the heaving breast of the girl that climbed that trail with me,
Till we fell on our faces side by side and kissed the still water together.

There were grains of brown sand in the still round basin,
Cool and blue as the skies and her eyes with brown flecks in them,
Looking out on a widening vista of space and of splendor,
And a riot of red and gold, aspens and oak scrub that climbed to us;
All the leaves of the year burning up for us,
To warm our Indian summer,
As all the year's waters were strained
To make that cup cool for us.

If I could find that spring again,
And see her face again,
Grave and glowing and good for me
As the taste of that water was good for me,
And feel the clasp of her hand
As we climbed the rocks to the summit of the range;
I could go back with her again
To the days of life's beginning
When we lay with our lips at the breast of the mother of all,
Guiltless of sinning or sorrow or desire,
And happy as children are happy.

Santa Fé 11 20 18

LOST LAKE

Two snow peaks looked down on it over their shoulders,
As it lay in a green pit below them.
And it smiled for one hour each day
When the sun stooped straight down and kissed it.

More still and cool than cloistered nuns and novices,
It lay in the shade of the pine trees and mirrored stars more constantly
Than any lake in the world, and the shadows guarded it.
Many have fought to find it and failed for a lifetime.

One I caught, looking down from my tallest snow peak's shoulder,
The gleam of its water at noon, and I left all the world at my feet.
And I went crashing down, thrashing down, through shale and aspens and pines
Straight to the mark that I missed; and must climb to discover it again.

Once in the eyes of a child that was a woman for a moment,
As the sun warmed her and waked old and strange pregnant appeals,
I caught a light like the smile of Lost Lake, and I lost it
When her heart that was hardly awake, lay asleep in the shadows again.

Santa F* 12 11 18

TESUQUE CHURCH

A blue square of sky with two bells in it
Is fretted in the wedge of a lean white-washed gable.
Below through a great gray square of shadow
A woman in a pale blue blanket leans and looks out of the door.

Beyond and above the flat white facade is blueness illimitable.
And the great black and white bulk of the main range builds toward it.
And the high white dome of Baldy, rounded and fuller than Fuji's high note of ecstasy,
Swells to the greater dome of the sky's blue beauty forever and ever.

Below on the steps of the church a row of Indian women and children,
Two, doll-like, Japanese, red and remote, with eyes obliquely oblivious,
One in a purple shawl with a face like a fate intent and terrible;
All with hard heavy black bangs falling low down brown foreheads are watching the dancing.

Santa Fé 12 27 18

TEN CANDLES

Before the gold and white altar in our old cathedral aisle,
Before the painted statue of Christ with a burning heart and a scarlet robe,
Before "they brought him to the temple" lettered in lace below wounded feet,
Before two tall yellow candles unlit in brass candlesticks' yellower columns:

In a brass skeleton lectern rack, with tiers of round and empty sockets
Slanting up toward Christ, ten candles are lighted out of seven and thirty:
Ten small white and gold ardent altar flames, burning softly and steadily.
One is so near the end of its mission that the flame is taller than the whiteness that remains.

Underneath, the bottom of the rack looks like the floor of a bird cage.
Here is a no-man's land of dead candles, candles time has done with, charred and guttered out
In the fever of a worship of wounds that burns before him, waiting for his Judgment Day;
All the blood from the pale face of the girl who kneels here drained away to redden the burning heart and the scarlet robe of Christ.

Santa Fé 4 3 21

THE CABIN

The cabin has yellow log walls and a front porch with a hammock in it,
And a great gray stone fire-place built into the side hill at the back.
There are two big beds by the fire; and two long low windows beside them
Look up and down the valley of a river that slips through the arms of the hills.

There is a row of books on the mantel that I made there.
A row of pegs in a corner supports sweaters, slickers, frayed riding breeches and fisherman's waders.
There is a typewriter on a table beside papers, newspapers, magazines and a cribbage board.
There are trout rods, rifles, quirts on the walls, and webbed snow shoes for winter.

There is a bay horse who puts his white nose through my window each morning I wake,
And a black and white dog who sleeps on the foot of my bed every night, and shakes hand with me.
There is a gray squirrel with fringed ears that cracks nuts on my mantel piece.
And a boy who comes and plays cribbage with me, and finds worms for my fishing.

All these are good in their way, and I manage to live with them,
Like the pines on the mountains that march to the sky, and the river that runs to the ocean.
But they all point to something above and beyond and inscrutable.
They have taught me to reach out and take hold of life, and to tell of her.

They have taught me to wake in the moonlight and want her,
And to see in the shadow by the foot of my bed her small pair of shoes,
And a little, light lacy heap on a chair, like a cloud half asleep in the moonlight,
And a little gray gauntlet unmated all day on my table reaching to me.

Sometimes I see it when I ride laid lightly on Gray Leg's shoulder.
Sometimes I feel those little brown shoes in my hands when we climb the high trails.
Sometimes I hear a voice that is tuned to the whisper of winds and the song of the river.
Sometimes I see on the summits a face that the flush of the sunrise foretold.

Sometimes when I write I feel two finger tips sealing my eyelids,
Or someone saying "Who am I? Where am I?" with the ghost of a kiss when the fire dies,
Or a warm little hand half awake that reaches for mine when I wake from dim dreams in the midnight.
But I think she comes closest of all when her profile is sculptured in shadow,
And her feet falter closer to our cabin while we count the first stars in the skies.

Santa Fé 11 15 18

THE SANTA FE TRAIL

The high plains were a stage for it, the rolling prairies gave its tempo.
The mountains were its climax, the desert its insistence,
On this trail that tied together the tie ribs of a nation,
This new wild folk migration that went traveling with the sun.

By salt buffalo wallows, beside slow running rivers,
Past mountain passes threaded by big horns and wild stallions,
Over mesas gray with grease-wood, by foot hills cactus spined,
Where snow that flecked the desert left blind stains from day to day:

Across the great arena between Missouri and the Rockies,
Past black stains of death's dark foot prints across the dreary plains,
Where they burned brave men and women in the ashes of wrecked wagons,
And Apaches and Kiowas, Utes and Sioux tore off their scalps:

Where highwaymen murdered men who rode in low ox-carts and raw new Concord coaches,
Mexicans killing Gringos, and Gringos scalping Greasers like Indians,
Where they buried bags of silver by tall trees on shallow river islands,
And came back to find them sometimes; where they marked the trail with graves:

Where the red men tombed their war chiefs on lofty sapling scaffoldings,
Wrapped in furs they stripped from women waiting underneath in winter to follow them,
Where trappers piled up stones upon their silent partners lest the wolves should paw them out,
Where blizzard-whitened mounds grew flat as sodded graves grow flat more slowly:

Where the pack trains bore charred corpses on their sweating mules and horses,
And Comanches with trained bell mares yelled, and shot stampeding them at night,
Where ox-trains plodded steadily, and babes were born in canvas tilts to fill their thinning ranks,
And men made love to women like lovers on sinking ships:

Where the buffalo ran in rivers on their northward spring migration,
Black rivers splitting past still wagons like rocks, wild rivers stampeding, black rapids overwhelming them;
Where red rivers of prairie fires swept past the trail and wiped it out,
Till men trod out the ashes in the ruts that time had worn:

Where their escorts trotted in ragged ranks to the New Mexico border line,
Bearded dragoons in dull blue coats and dusty caps, and Mexican lancers in steeple hats and silver tricked trappings,
Where red-shirted miners, and raw Forty-Niners in newly beaded buckskins, sang and shouted, betted and doubted death and tall stories,
And gamblers like black priests of chance tried out their eyes and hands:
Where fat French and Spanish priests and rawboned Moravian missionaries
Met and scowled or smiled at wayside weddings and christenings,
Where lean New England spinsters stared at Mormon and Indian women and fat Latin prostitutes,
And at last struck hands together by some death-bed, squaw and maid:

The high plains were a stage for it, the rolling prairies swept it westward,
Past the mountains, past the desert, past all suffering and dying to the fruit trees of Tesuque and the sunset,
Where the buffalo ran, and the Indian rode, and the Lancers spurred, and the trappers tramped; and the world rolls after them,
In a new steel folk migration just begun where theirs is done.

Santa Fé 12 4 18

THE OLD DIM TRAIL

The old, dim trail is gray and faint as a memory of many years ago.
It sags down past the foot hills like a sick snake in autumn.
It crawls through a shallow valley of bones that are bleached and lusterless.
It sidles into a bone-dry arroyo and wearily heaves itself out of it.
It inches past rock ledges bare and brown as the ribs of earth's rotting carcass.
It is a fading trace of the past and of feet that have no power now to warm or wear it.

It creeps to the loma's edge and laps over it.
It falls into great new gullies that gash and distort it.
Pitching past them, it persists through a shallow wash full of wagon tracks.
Passing fence posts and telephone posts where men staked out two rods of it for a wagon road.
It goes on beside a footpath by a fence at the side of a field,
A field built up in shallow terraces with a gray ditch high and dry at the top of it.

It points to Santa Fé that lies below it,
A city old and gray in the gray dust of November under November skies,
With the crumbling gray adobes in the foreground with their fruit trees,
With its gray roofs in the hollow of its little hidden river,
With one great gray dome that rises higher than the spires of tall poplar trees surrounding it,
And the slow gray spirals floating light against the sullen, high, gray, northern ridge that dominates the whole of it.

It lies there, nestling in the great gray hollow,
Like a city long asleep and barely breathing,
A city of gray ghosts of traders, trappers and trailsmen,
Horsemen and hunters, soldiers and captains,
Padres with their burros, bishops and governors,
Mothers and their children, cowboys, scouts and Indians,
Husbandmen with burdens, and the flocks they drove before them,
Down this old trail that died here like last year's water in dry and dusty ditches,
To be one raveled fringe of a dream of a city forgotten.

Others may delve in the past and dusty pages and parchments in the Old Palace library,
To track life down to the death and old trails to extinction,
Like rivers that sink in the sea and the dead in the midnight.
I and another I know will follow backward and steadily upward.
For every trail leads two ways; past the fence posts and ditches,
Past the arroyos like wounds, and the ledges and bare ribs of earth and animals,
Past green pinyons like plumes of the great folded wings of the foot hills,
To the tall mountains' gray brows, and the dazzling white veils of the snow peaks.
Up to a past that is older than all earth's dreams and her cities, and new as sunrise this morning,
Up to a sunlight unshadowed by dust; that first trails start for.

Santa Fé 11 13 18

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THE REVENANT

I sit in the New Museum Patio,
At a long brown, bare writing table, in Santa Fé.
And the cool gray walls are good to me, and the gray shadows
Of the vigas round the courtyard shift and lengthen,
Like the dark green shadows on the green grass plot in the center.

The round, brown pine tree pillars of the cloister stand up sturdily.
They have found peace at last in a place of long and ceaseless silences.
That only the tireless ticking of a typewriter or the foot-fall of a careless tourist distracts or distrubs.
It is a place of peace and cool repose for people worn threadbare by the world's vast restlessness
With its open hatchway to Heaven and the sunlight that smiles on them.

I have sailed on many ships and shall sail again
On blue days and on still days, with their hidden engines throbbing steadily.
But here in mid land high on the roof of Mountain America,
Ships and the makers and movers of ships are as far from me and as unfit for me
As they were for the brown Franciscans who planted the brown pine tree crosses here three hundred years ago.
But they planted the masts and yards of ships wherever they set them up;
Brown symbols of a world that sails a sea unfathomed and shoreless;
A sea of space and of terror and time, death and midnight and mystery.

For this world is a world of sailors who stand on earth and water ridges,
And who watch the sky and the winds and the clouds perforce or die in the din of machines.
So much the West has taught me; and yesterday when I took the train at Lamy
For the last time in a year or two, perhaps, I loved this mountain land of ours
More than ever before, it seemed, with its storm that swept down on us;

Drowning far blue mountain vistas, and the yuccas budded and blooming by the fringes of raw, red arroyos;
And its high clear nearness to the sky and to space that we sail in forever and forever.

I must go East again to the cities and seaports of all tall mountain voyaging,
Cities that are sirens painted and purblind, and homes of marred mothers and masters of men.
I shall go East to be lost for a time in the dazzle of the arc-lights and the coils of tortured subways.
As a diver toils through a sea wall of surf with strange stars in his eyes, and his heart and lungs tense with laboring,
I shall come out again in a wide world of air in the far-flung furrows of high snow-crested ranges,
There on the sinuous crest of the world, in the sun that is life to all living.

Here in this hatchway of time with the blue sky brooding white clouds above me
And the green earth growing white hollyhocks that bloom in the corners of our courtyard:
As a sailor sits cross-legged in a calm, dreaming a little as he stitches sails for tomorrow's adventuring;
I set my stitches of ink on white sails of paper for me or another; and I know
I shall come back again whatever may meet me tomorrow
To this West that I love best of all in the still, deep, hidden, human heart of me.
For when I die the winds of the sky shall bring back here what is left of me.

Santa Fé 7 1 19

TREASURE SEEKERS

Near their studio two friends of ours found scattered potsherds.
They started to look for lost foundations on the loma slope in April light.
We traced the stone oblong of a house that looked at sunrise as we looked at it.
Tomorrow I may go there and dig beside them, near the corner or the crossing of two walls.

We may find treasure of turquoise, or obsidian, spear heads and arrow heads,
Perfect burial bowls, or a bone flute that lay mute five hundred years,
Yucca fibre wet with sweat, blood or tears that dried to dust.
We must make haste with our digging, while the dream of it all is stuff of spring.

We who try to paint and write today, may bring to our dead brothers
Something that is good for their ghosts, though we never find an idol at all;
Never disinter one skeleton; there is treasure on our loma when we try for it,
Stooping in the shadow of lost walls to make a memory, of a house of life that stood here four square to sun and storm.

Santa Fé 4 3 21

PUPPETS AND PEOPLE

We had a community theatre here two years ago.
Something happened, or failed to happen, and it disappeared.
Now we have a new little Art Theatre, intimately narrowing,
Fairly efficient—as the French say, the good ever fights with the best.

Clever comedies cleverly staged are all very well in their way.
Once every month or two is too long to wait for all we must go without.
Someday this community thing will come back to stay in our hearts;
we'll wonder at
Miracle plays and other plays of many clans in our tribe, and Greek
and Spanish dances done as San Domingo does.

V. D. says that nowadays she'd rather see a first magnitude track
meet,
Or a big base ball game, breaking hard in the ninth, than most of their
minor puppet shows.
V. D. would rather be than act; being what she is, I'm not blaming her.
There are times when I prefer tennis to oratorios, and hiking to Ber-
nard Shaw.

"Acting, like dancing, has its use," says V. D.; "So has war when
you're keyed up to it.
There are mobs that we hate—but we want to live in a crowd, now
and then, going strong;
Something more modern than Greece and minuets, something as big
and heart stirring as those mountain tops.
Tragedy poises there, the high plains sustain then—Whitman's men
and women, to match all out of doors."

Santa Fé 5 7 21

PUSSY CATS AND CHERUBIM

There are certain rooms upstairs in our museum of art that belong
More to an artist dead and little known than to anyone alive.
People see the pictures. but sunrise and moonlight see more than
Beauregard's beauty slowly spelled
Through the long gallery and the two ante rooms and the corner room
resplendent
With its hand carved and color patterned great vigas and pine furniture, and the tall copper tea urn whose shadow slowly shifts.

"We ought to use this room more," said Vera Deane, one day when
we looked in after lunch.
"In spite of their hand picked lady profiteer patronesses of the sort
that keeps culture to itself.
Once in a while Notabilities arrive, linger in the state, meet our Capital City.
A Function is arranged; then they throw open the doors of their toy
house of littleness to some of us.
Anyhow they haven't locked them up yet, to keep trippers from Kansas
and Texas in their places.

Men are such egotistic brutes with their treasure houses of small art
strivings
We small town women have to copy them; you will stage your big
book tea elsewhere.
Men and women and artists forever are divided into sharers and
hoarders.
It takes both kinds to go on with; the little ones play safe when
they can.
It takes a big person to get life across from a studio or a tea urn and
stay with it.

Little folks get together in cliques and clubs; they graft on Institutions men have never yet learned to use.
You have a community center of a sort, and a Stranger's Club downstairs; be thankful for that.
Hoarders are better than wasters—sometimes—though they put their
Impossible Pussy cats
In our corner Pueblo fire place yonder, and elsewhere; if you get
what I mean.
Life wished social andirons on us as well as warmer things; I like the
dumb ones better; let's go and take a ride."

Half an hour later, by an adobe on the loma, four brown dolls of the dirt
Stared at us speechless till V. D. startled in them symptoms of cherubim starting chuckling.
That night she sighed and told me "They never known how much they miss,
Those club women and culture hoarders, who have one or two, or none at all.
I'd rather share my life with my man and my last born's brothers and sisters' broken playthings.
Toy houses are for fun, my dear, each empty one like empty eyes means tragedy—play Mousorgsky."

Santa Fé 5 6 21

SUNSET—NEW MEXICO

On the loma shoulder by the gray adobe,
Two horses stand by a well head high on the sky line.
The first snow lingers still in a lonely hollow,
Like a handkerchief dropped by a dancer as she hurries.

Scraps of it hide in the creases and cracks of the foot hills.
They are crumpled heaps of clothes that slid past the knees of the mountains
A hundred thousand thousand years ago, when they began
To make them ready for music whiter than moonlight at midnight.

Twilight is their tire woman, eternally patient.
The shadows are her dusky slaves that slip on tiptoe
Into hidden closets behind the clouds' low curtains,
Into distant corners of far gardens in high ranges' treasure cities,
Bringing the elements of bueaty out of dimness for her high and nightly ritual.
The sunset flames and glows and tremoles,
Like an island of opals disintegrating and flooding
Blue lakes with scarlet flakes, and bare gray beaches with reaches of mirrored amber.
And the sky changes as a woman's gray eyes brighten in a round and silver banded mirror,
When her face is flushing softly in the light of her own loveliness.

Heaven has lit her footlights,
And lifted up her great drop curtain ever so little.
And here on the edge of her radiance,
Where the dancers' feet begin to beat ever so little to new pulses stirring them,
The trailing borders of their robes appear;
Ultramarine and crimson, pale green, pearl gray and lilac;
Purple deeper than twilight's own deep hem as she lets fall,
All the flowers that flame and flicker on far mesas for the mazes of her dance.
All the fruits of all the plantations of earth are glowing together there;
Airy orbs and ardent apples for dream orchards and vineyards, and red and blue berries bright with dew.
And they tread them under their feet in the harvest vat of the dusk, and slowly distil
The cool, dark wine of the night that she lifts to the lips of her dancers.

Twilight swings strings of jewels that fall and flash before their waiting feet;
Rubies, beryls, spinels; topaz, jaspar and turquoise;
Sapphires, pearls, opals, emeralds; sardonyx and amethyst;
And dull gray agates at last, like pebbles for the feet of the dancers.

But the feet of the dancers cannot feel either pebbles or apples.
Their feet are of air, their bodies are air, their breasts are air, and their lips that whisper it.
Their faces are phantoms of light and beauty beyond all beauty men image or mirror.
Dreams of the Lord of all Light who made His mountains old women who wait for His singers and dancers;
With their heads in the night where the stars are coronets and tall tiaras and high halos,
Rounding their brows and their throats like falling notes of the song all space is ringing with at sunset
Where high on the loma's shoulder beside their horses by the well head,
A woman and a girl are standing; looking and longing, and listening.

Santa Fé 10 31 18

HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COURT

A girl with a racket sweeping high, smashing to the back line—
An arc like a crescent moon inverted—Diana—Valkyrie,
Swinging speed and stark will to the mark wth the weight of a war hammar—
Etched against a skyline of glowing snow peaks and sunset light.

Day grows grayer as she drives duller balls to dimmer corners.
There is a Woman of the Worlds somewhere who serves spinning planets and plunging meteors so;
Shifting speed and matter through surer meshes that move tomorrow,
To make the mothers of a nation of men fit to fight forever failing light.

Santa Fe 5 8 21

ENVOY

I have come back again to this mountain land I always love,
After many journeyings, farther east and west.
I have seen two oceans, and tall cities I am tiring of.
And the ranges spell long purpose through blue beauty's dome of rest.

The ranges of lost wonderlands men loved and longed for yesterday,
Where their ghosts go slowly through the dust of dim and distant trails;
And the little winds of morning rise, and dead hearts stir and start away.
And the singing skyline changes till the twilight dulls and fails.

Here is freedom from perdition, in the jangled wills of driven men,
And sick souls of wasted women, in her high, clear amber light;
And a timeless gray tradition that old bells twice blessed intone again,
When the twilight like God's kiss comes down to wish this world good night.

Here is solace in sunrises, when her eastern stubborn wall of stone
Seems to lift to airy altar lights; past timber line and snow
The shadows some caressing earth; and here a man may lie alone
With the eye of heaven that warms today, and what the wind may know.

There is sound of running water where her hidden rivers glide,
There are pine trees talking to red rocks, and to any human ear
That can spell one least still letter of truth her trembling aspens hide,
And forget those fevered cities while her secrets whisper here.

Santa Fé 5 5 4

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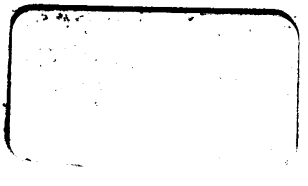
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